



Trail Talk

July & August

2015

As summer was in full swing, the committed Volunteers of the Conasauga Ranger District continued their stewardship of the National Forest. July and August may be the hottest months here in Northwest Georgia but that did not deter our dedicated volunteer groups. Team Conasauga continued its assault on the overgrown vegetation on our wilderness trails, trying to beat the heat on Rough Ridge and the Jacks River. Meanwhile Larry Wheat and the Friends of Dry Creek have kept up their diligent work clearing trails and maintaining the Dry Creek Area. I cannot wait for you to read all about the flurry of work that was accomplished these last couple of months. Larry Wheat has written two wonderful articles about their events at Dry Creek. I also have a very special treat: a young woman shared with us her experience during Team Conasauga's July Working Weekend. Thanks, Katie, and we hope to see you at the next workday.

As always I like to wrap up the intro with thanking all of our Volunteers for their hard work, not just these last two months but for all the years of dedicated service. I know we each make a difference every time we go out, but the cumulative effect of this over these many years has made a lasting effect on the Conasauga Ranger District that you all should be very proud of.

Thanks again and keep up the hard work.

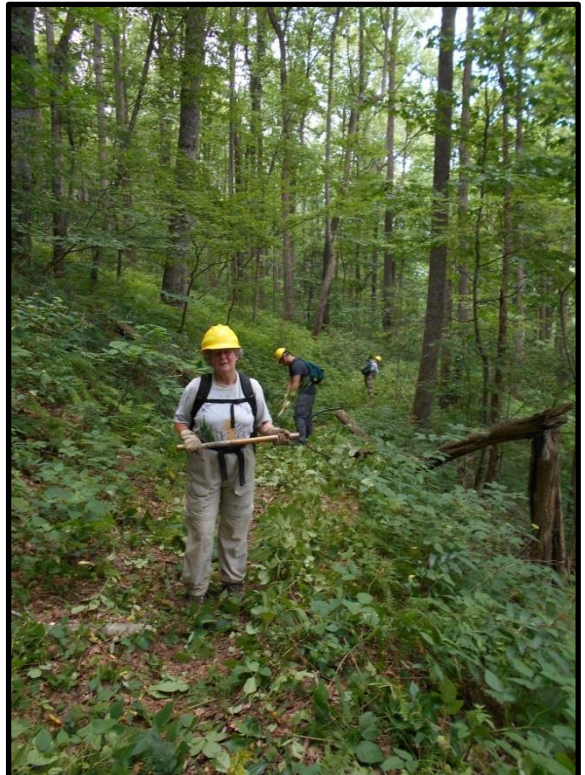


> > > > **July** < < < <

Team Conasauga had a great outing on July 11th, trying to beat the heat sling blading Rough Ridge trail. We had three volunteers: **Robert Edmondson, Jim Bishop, and Wanda Brown**, as well as two new comers, friends of Robert, **Josh and Katie Kellam**. We had a great day but I don't want to tell you too much about it because Katie, an enthusiastic teenager, agreed to do a little write up for the day. Thanks again for sharing your first trail volunteer experience with us.

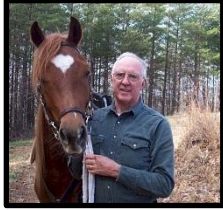
"The crew was small on Team Conasauga's 76th work weekend, but managed to get a lot done. The six people making up this month's team -Ranger Kevin, Ms. Wanda, Mr. Jim, Mr. Robert, my dad and I- swing bladed nearly four miles up the Rough Ridge trail, passing the abandoned Sugar Cove trail and turning back not long before Crooked Dogwood. The weather was mild and very pleasant up in the mountains, remaining somewhere between 70 and 75 degrees even into the afternoon. The Wilderness is beautiful at this time of year, with a profusion of growing things that needed clearing back but that also make the Rough Ridge trail such a lovely trail to hike. It was mostly light work, although right around lunch and for a ways after we did encounter a stretch of dense undergrowth. Overall it was a very productive day. It is a unique experience; working on a narrow path with a carpet of ferns stretching on either side, the only noises the rhythmic swish of the swing blades, the occasional remark from a companion, and the forest all around you. It feels nice to know that others will be able to enjoy the trail that you helped to clear, and in the future, I hope to be a part of another trail clean up. Any and all help is welcomed, and Team Conasauga would love to have you at the next trail clean up!"

Katie Kellam



Dedicated Volunteers Work Together to Keep the Dry Creek Trail System in Tip-Top Condition

Larry Wheat, CONF Trail Crew Leader



Our July 11 trail improvement day at the Dry Creek Trail System was another hot one. Temperatures climbed into the low 90s and many of us were working in direct sunshine. Lots of good maintenance was accomplished by dedicated volunteers from the Back Country Horsemen of Northwest Georgia (BCHNWG), the Northwest Georgia Chapter of the Southern Off-Road Bicycle Association (NWGA SORBA), and other volunteers. Several of the regular SORBA volunteers had a conflict on this date, so they came out at various times during the week to cut brush. **Kathy Hansen** drove up and mowed part of the parking lot grass two days during the week and then helped with her brush mower on the regular Saturday workday. We are proud of, and thankful for, the collaborative support our trails receive here in northwest Georgia.

Volunteers who worked during our Saturday activity were **Joe Schoech, Bill Semsrott, Kathy Hansen, Debbie Park, Larry Park, Kathy Henson, Eddie Henson, Steve Harrell, Tom Blackwell, Tannis Blackwell, and Larry Wheat**. The main tasks accomplished were trailhead mowing and bush hogging, and trail side brush and briar cutting.



Debbie Park trimming at trailhead



Larry Park bush hogging the trailhead

The SORBA folks who helped before (and some after) the general workday were **Marcus Moore, Gennie Dasinger, Denise Cross, Conrad Fernandez, Steve Harrell, David Wheaton, and Rick Moon**. The following volunteers provided and operated special equipment: **Kathy Hansen** with her field and brush mower, **Steve Harrell** with the SORBA/GPTA field and brush mower, and **Larry Park** with his tractor and bush hog. Other volunteers provided lawn mowers, grass or

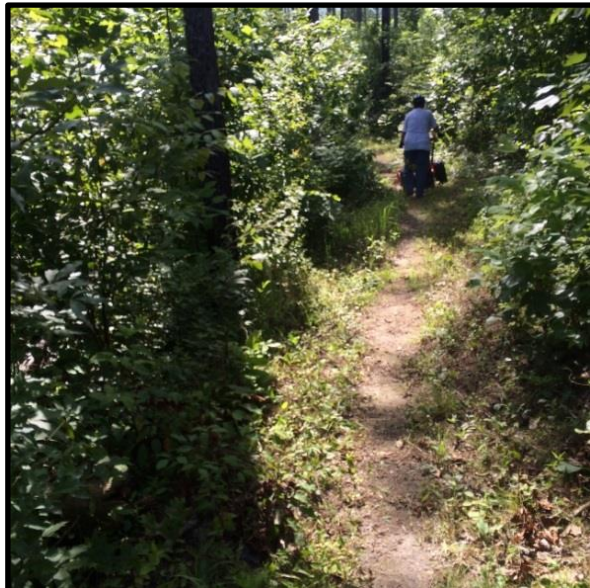
brush trimmers, and hedge trimmers. We would not be able to maintain this 29-mile system without power tools.



Kathy Hansen operating the field and brush mower



Steve Harrell relaxing after work with the second field and brush mower loaded and ready to go home



The photo at the left shows part of the Orange trail (#236) in the southern part of the trail system. This area suffered a major fire many years ago. Some trees and shrubs are now getting tall enough to provide shade in spots. Several more years may be required before users can enjoy full shade, but it will happen. Then the brush and weed maintenance will lessen.

> > > > August < < < <

Thank You to Those Supporting the Dry Creek Trail System

Larry Wheat, CONF Trail Crew Leader



The temperature at our August 1st trail improvement day at the Dry Creek Trail System was close to 90°F by noon, but it did start out at a comfortable mid-60s. Several maintenance tasks were completed and the trails are in great condition. As usual, the volunteers were from the Back Country Horsemen of Northwest Georgia (BCHNWG), the Northwest Georgia Chapter of the Southern Off-Road Bicycle Association (NWGA SORBA), and other individuals. We are proud of, and thankful for, the collaborative support our trails receive here in northwest Georgia.

Volunteers who worked during our Saturday activity were **Joe Schoech, Bill Semsrott, Steve Harrell, Tom Blackwell, Tannis Blackwell, Louis Bondurant, Patricia Petelle, Pic Petelle, Bill Hester, and Larry Wheat**. The Henson family (**Kathy, Eddie, and Andrew Henson**) had a time conflict with the morning period, but did come over Saturday evening and provided grass/weed trimming and other cleanup activities. Thanks to **Kathy Hansen** who brought her mower up early in the week and mowed part of the parking lot grass.



Deadfall on Red-before and after cutting



Clearing deadfall to support brush mower use



On Saturday the following volunteers provided and operated special equipment: **Patricia & Pic Petelle** and **Steve Harrell** brought field and brush mowers; **Bill Hester** and **Joe Schoech** brought UTVs; and certified sawyers brought chainsaws and their associated safety equipment. Other volunteers provided grass or brush trimmers or hand tools.

While I have this authoring soapbox, I want to add our gratitude to the management team of the US Forest

Service, Conasauga Ranger District (CRD). The recreation officer and the district ranger have been supportive of volunteer needs and actions taken to maintain the Dry Creek Trail System in excellent condition. We maintain about 29 miles of trail, including a couple miles of the Regional Pinhoti Trail that is in the northern portion of the Dry Creek Trail System. At times we have been granted specific-one-day permission to use one or two UTVs to haul crushed rock for trail hardening, or to transport volunteers with chainsaws so they could clear deadfall. For this August workday we had permission to utilize two UTVs, each with a chainsaw team clearing deadfall on parts of trails #236, 237, 238, 240, 241, 244, and 245. We had brush mowers on parts of trails #237 and 235.



Trimming around signs



Trimming by trailhead structures



Garbage pickup



Leaf blowing SST toilet area

Team Conasauga's August Work Day

We were small but we were mighty on Team Conasauga's August work day. Four volunteers: **Jim Leatherwood, Wanda Brown, Jim Bishop, Larry Thomas** and I set out from the Jacks River Bridge early Saturday morning. The air was warm and the water was cool as we made our way up river. The sling blading was light up until the first crossing as the trail is wide up until this point, but beyond that the trail got narrower and vegetation became thick. We worked diligently beating back the brush and focusing on the approaches to the crossings to help hikers find the old railroad bed on the other side. The river was beautiful as the sun poured through the trees and the cardinal flowers shone bright red along the banks. Even though there were only five of us, we made it about 4 miles, turning back a crossing before the Horseshoe bend trail junction. What a great way to spend a summer day.



Thanks you so much for all the hard work.



Dates for the 2015 Workdays:

October 3, 2015 - Dry Creek Work Day,
contact Larry Wheat
at l.wheat@mindspring.com

October 3, 2015 –Hickory Creek Trail
(Rice Camp TH)
(waterbars)

October 24, 2015 – USFS Volunteer
Appreciation Picnic

November 6-7, 2015 – Beech Bottom
Closure Area
(campsite closure and a good
way to see the falls)
(Working Weekend # 77)

December 5, 2015 – Pinhoti/Dry Creek Work Day
contact Larry Wheat
at l.wheat@mindspring.com





For more information on activities and events happening on the Conasauga Ranger District, please check out the following links to the various associations who are committed to helping us provide a safe, enjoyable trail experience for our forest users...

Team Conasauga: www.teamconasauga.org or www.facebook.com/teamconasauga

Benton MacKaye Trail Association (BMTA): www.bmta.org

Backcountry Horsemen of Northwest Georgia (BCHNWG): www.bchnwg.org

Backcountry Horsemen of North Georgia (BCHNG): www.bchng.org

Northwest Georgia Southern Off-Road Bike Association (NWGA SORBA): www.nwgasorba.org

Georgia Pinhoti Trail Association: www.pinhoti.info

Appalachian Trail Association (GATC): www.georgia-atclub.org

Ellijay Mountain Biking Association (EMBA): www.ellijaymountainbike.org

Southern Off-Road Bike Association (SORBA): www.sorba.org or www.ngwasorba.org

Co-Trails: www.cotrails.org

Any interested people, please contact me at kvasalinda@fs.fed.us. Thanks, and see you on the trail.

~Kevin~

